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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/ARP, AF/E

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KTFN](#) [ER](#) [SO](#) [QA](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN IDEAS ON SOMALIA

Classified By: Ambassador Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) Key Points:

-- Assistant Minister for African Affairs Mona Omar told the Ambassador that the Government of Egypt (GoE) considers the current situation in Somalia to be the most important on the African continent, and it has put together a plan to try to prevent Al Shibaab from succeeding in Somalia and expanding its influence into other countries in the region.

-- The GoE wants to work with the USG to split Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys from Al Shibaab by offering to remove Aweys from the "terrorist list" in exchange for his participation in a GoE-sponsored dialogue. Talks would be in Cairo between Shaykh Aweys and representatives of Transitional Federal Government (TFG).

-- Egypt also proposes incentivizing Aweys' backers in Eritrea by using U.S. influence to forestall potential UNSC sanctions against Eritrea. Omar said that while the GOE maintains good relations with the Eritrean Government, it has not been in touch with Shaykh Aweys or Eritrean President Isaias Afworki to gauge their receptivity to the proposal.

-- The Ambassador told Omar that the U.S. appreciates Egyptian efforts to cooperate on Somalia. She noted that any delisting process would be complex, but undertook to convey GoE ideas to Washington. Omar extended an invitation to A/S Carson to visit Cairo to consult on African issues.

12. (S/NF) Comment: The Egyptians are casting about for practical ways to prevent Al Shibaab from displacing the TFG. We believe that the GoE would welcome a USG response or counterproposal to their ideas and Egyptian officials appear to be open to a bilateral discussion on ways to support the government of Shaykh Sharif. Post believes an A/S Carson visit to Cairo to engage GoE officials on Somalia, Sudan and other areas of common interest in Africa would be a constructive way forward. End Comment.

13. (S/NF) Ambassador met with Assistant Minister for African Affairs, Mona Omar, on July 9. Omar told the Ambassador that the GoE considers the current situation in Somalia to be "the most important on the African continent." She said that Egypt is concerned that if Al Shibaab succeeds in Somalia, it will look to other countries in the region to expand its "cancerous" movement. Omar stated that Al Shibaab is using Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys as a Somali facade, but the group is in fact is dominated by "foreign leadership" with links to Al Qaeda.

14. (S/NF) Omar told the Ambassador that the GoE has a plan to split Shaykh Aweys from Al Shibaab. However, she acknowledged that Egypt needs U.S. assistance. Omar said that GoE wants bring Shaykh Aweys to Cairo for a dialogue

with the TFG leadership, but in order to do so it needs to offer him "a carrot." The carrot is the removal of Shaykh Aweys from the U.S. and U.N. terrorist lists. (Note: Shaykh Aweys is currently designated under Executive Order 13224 & by the United Nations Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee. End Note). Ambassador asked Omar for her assessment of Shaykh Aweys' goals. Omar responded by saying that Aweys wants to be President, but he can be "bribed" with another position such as "Deputy President".

15. (S/NF) Omar mentioned to the Ambassador that the GoE would also need to offer a concession to Eritrean President Afworki, whom she referred to as Aweys' "godfather," to gain his consent for Aweys to accept the Egyptian invitation. She believes that the USG could use its influence to delay potential UNSC sanctions against Eritrea. According to Omar, the idea of sanctions against Eritrea for supporting Al Shibaab met with no objections at the July 1-3 AU Summit in Libya. She admitted that Eritrea was financing and providing arms to Aweys and the Shibaab in Somalia, but she said that sanctions are the wrong move because they will only deepen Eritrea's isolation. Omar stated that Eritrea is not the primary source of the Shibaab funding, and she hypothesized that the money could be coming from individuals in Qatar, Iran, or Saudi Arabia.

16. (S/NF) Omar met in Cairo on July 5 with Somali FM Omaar. She told the Ambassador that the Somali FM asserted that Shaykh Aweys was not involved in terrorism against American interests. The Somali FM told Omar that Al Shibaab were not loyal to Shaykh Aweys and would probably discard him after accomplishing their objectives. Omar said that the Somali FM

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was also working to integrate 500 soldiers from his native Somaliland into the Somali Joint Forces.

17. (S/NF) Omar told the Ambassador that if the USG agrees to work with the GoE on this issue, Egypt will solicit support from other countries in the Horn of Africa region as well as the Arab League, African Union, and Organization of the Islamic Conference to assure a "collective approach." She said that Egypt's goal is to shore up the TFG, unite Somalia, and bring peace and security to the region. However, Omar said that the GoE has not been in touch with Shaykh Aweys or Eritrean President Isaias Afworki to gauge their receptivity to the proposal. The Ambassador told Omar that the USG appreciates Egyptian efforts to cooperate on Somalia and would convey GoE ideas to Washington. She questioned why the U.S. would seek to delay sanctions when the entire AU had not objected and noted that delisting could be complicated. Omar extended an invitation to A/S Carson to visit Cairo to consult on African issues.

SCOBey